

Exodus 20: 15 – The Ten Commandments, part 8, “You shall not steal.”¹



Main point: Do not selfishly take or hold on to things.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: The Ten Commandments are God’s laws of love. God saved his people from slavery in Egypt, and then God defines the relationship: I love you, and this is how you love me back.

Exodus 20:1-11

- The first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other God before me.” God says: You’re my number one, because I saved you from slavery and made you my special people. Therefore, make ME number one for you!
- The second commandment: Don’t make an image of me. Don’t try to create me in YOUR image, to do what YOU want. Trust me and follow me as I am.
- The third commandment: Don’t use my name in vain. Wear my name well, reflecting Me.
- The fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day. God provides!
- The fifth commandment: Honor your mother and father: made in God’s image; legacy of respect continues.
- The sixth commandment: Do not murder. Don’t be life takers, literally and figuratively.
- The seventh commandment: Do not be unfaithful. Keep your promises.
- Now we’re up to number EIGHT!

Study: Exodus 20: 15: “You shall not steal.”

1. *Who is this commandment about?*
 - a. The first four commandments are about our relationship with God; vertical.
 - b. The rest of the commandments are about how we treat others; horizontal.
 - i. *Starting with?* Our parents.
 - ii. *Then moving toward?* Everyone else.
2. *I think it’s interesting that stealing rises to the level of murder and adultery! Let’s think more about that. Have you ever stolen anything, like when you were little? (Don’t worry, the statute of limitations has passed 😊) What sorts of things get stolen?*
 - a. Children: toys, candy, shiny things
 - b. Adults: Jewelry, money, cars, clothing
3. *Have you ever had something stolen from you? What does it feel like when something is taken that belongs to you?*
 - a. It hurts! ... but at some point, we’ve probably all done this to someone else.
4. Let’s look at what Jesus says in Matthew 6: 19-21:
 - i. ¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

¹ Some material gratefully borrowed from Fellowship Monrovia: <https://madeforfellowship.com/>

5. *What kinds of treasures do we “store up” on earth?*
 - a. Things of THIS world: possessions, honor, reputation
6. *Why do we have the temptation to “build up” those things?*
 - a. We think they’re important, they’ll last; that WE need to provide for ourselves.
 - b. “I need this and will do whatever it takes to get it.”
 - c. Not trusting God to provide; lack of trust for God’s sufficiency.
 - d. “God, what you have provided is not enough, so I’ve got to take it.”
7. *What will eventually happen to those things?*
 - a. They all pass away, are destroyed or stolen
8. *Let’s think more broadly about stealing. We can certainly steal physical stuff, but are there other kinds of “stealing”?*
 - a. Attitude of the heart: greed, “these things are MINE” (Toddler’s Creed, see below*)
 - b. Keeping or withholding things that are meant to be shared
 - c. Taking things from others for yourself – time, talent, emotional energy
9. *What condition of the heart makes stealing possible?*
 - a. Withholding things out of lack of trust; fear
 - b. Self-centeredness, selfishness; a tightly held, wary, suspicious heart
10. *What kinds of things might be “treasures in heaven”? What things does God give us that cannot be destroyed?*
 - a. Love, joy, peace
 - b. Relationships with others
 - c. Acts of service
 - d. Acts of worship

We must refuse to worship the things of this world, to hold tightly to things we’ve been given. Honor and trust God by sharing with others rather than taking what we think we need.

This commandment, as with all the others, is about LOVE. Don’t use something beautiful that God has given and make it an idol that ends up hurting God’s children.

Summary of The Ten Commandments: A love letter! An invitation to *love*, not a burden of law. It’s a beautiful invitation to relationship with God.

- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

* The Toddler’s Creed

If I want it, it’s mine.

If I give it to you and change my mind later, it’s mine.

If I can take it away from you, it’s mine.

If I had it a little while ago, it’s mine.

If it’s mine it will never belong to anyone else no matter what.

If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine.

If it looks like mine, it is mine.

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20: 1-17: And God spoke all these words, saying,

² “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³ “You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath ...

⁷ “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates....

¹² “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³ “You shall not murder.

¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “You shall not steal.

¹⁶ “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Matthew 6: 19-21

¹⁹ [Jesus said,] “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”